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C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 000220

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DEPT FOR AF/S - S. HILL, E. PELLETREAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [MI](#)
SUBJECT: MALAWI - MUTHARIKA UNLIKELY TO PRESS MUGABE

REF: A. LILONGWE 210

[1](#)B. LILONGWE 194

Classified By: Political Officer John Letvin for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: While media and civil society in Malawi have called for a quick release of Zimbabwean election results and have speculated about a potential change in leadership, the GOM has been largely silent on the subject. President Mutharika publicly stated that he would only communicate his opinions to the SADC troika, and that he believed the Zimbabwean people would solve their own problems. In past conversations with the Ambassador, Mutharika has bristled at the topic of Zimbabwe. The British High Commission meanwhile confirmed that Mutharika refused to speak with British Secretary for State and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband

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twice last week concerning Zimbabwe. Despite attendance at the SADC Summit in Lusaka last weekend, Mutharika is unlikely to put pressure on Mugabe to step down. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Private media and civil society organizations in Malawi have called for a quick release of Zimbabwe election results, and some have even speculated about a potential change of leadership. The GOM, however, has remained largely silent on the matter, and state-owned broadcaster Malawi Broadcasting Corporation has mainly reported Zimbabwean government and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission announcements (ref A) on the subject. Mutharika has issued no statements, and commented during a press conference that he would only share his opinions on Zimbabwe with the SADC troika. He further stated that the Zimbabwean people were capable of solving their own problems.

[1](#)3. (C) In past conversations with the Ambassador, Mutharika has bristled at the topic of Zimbabwe, making it clear the issue is not up for discussion. The British Deputy High Commissioner in Malawi confided to emboff in mid-April that UK Secretary for State and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband had attempted to speak with Mutharika on two consecutive days last week about Zimbabwe but was told both times that Mutharika was too busy to speak with him. Mutharika agreed to attend the SADC Summit in Lusaka last weekend but before departing made it clear he expected it to only last for one day.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: Mutharika has strong ties to Zimbabwe. His late wife was half-Zimbabwean and was raised in Zimbabwe, and

he owns substantial property, including a farm, in Zimbabwe. Mutharika has shown a favorable attitude towards Mugabe since coming into office, including hosting Mugabe for a state visit in May 2006. As a president of a minority government with elections only a year away, Mutharika will continue to pay close attention to international reaction to the Zimbabwe elections, but will not likely be convinced to join the pressure on Mugabe to step down.

EASTHAM